

5/11/69 ACTION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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Attached as a matter of interest is the press commentary on the President's 14 March decision regarding the ABM system. We have previously submitted by cable extracts of the more significant comments.

KAISER

Report at JEC

Attachments: DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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Drafted by: POL/M:JDStuart/jl

Contents and Classification Approved by: POL:RISpiers

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Department of State

TELEGRAM

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 MOSCOW 05028 01 OF 03 270823Z

IN THE TWO CATEGORIES THAT ARE BEING FROZEN, THAT IS TO SAY ICRMS AND SUBMARINE LAUNCHED BALLISTIC MISSILES, THE FACTS ARE THESE: THE SOVIET UNION HAS MORE INTER-CONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILES THAN THE UNITED STATES. THE SOVIET UNION HAS BEEN BUILDING INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILES; THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT AND HAS NO SUCH PROGRAM AT THE MOMENT.

THE SOVIET UNION HAS BEEN BUILDING SUBMARINE LAUNCHED BALLISTIC MISSILES AT THE RATE OF EIGHT SUBMARINES A YEAR. THE UNITED STATES HAS AT THIS MOMENT NO SUBMARINES UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

THEREFORE, THE QUESTION TO ASK IN ASSESSING THE FREEZE IS NOT WHAT SITUATION IT PERPETUATES, BUT WHAT SITUATION IT PREVENTS. THE QUESTION IS WHERE WE WOULD BE WITHOUT THE FREEZE. AND IF YOU PROJECT THE EXISTING BUILDING PROGRAMS OF THE SOVIET UNION INTO THE FUTURE, AS AGAINST THE ABSENCE OF BUILDING PROGRAMS OVER THE PERIOD OF THE FREEZE IN EITHER OF THE CATEGORIES THAT ARE BEING FROZEN, YOU WILL GET A MORE CORRECT CLUE TO WHY WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A GOOD AGREEMENT AND WHY WE BELIEVE THAT IT HAS MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO ARRESTING THE ARMS RACE.

THE WEAPONS ARE FROZEN, AS WE POINTED OUT, IN CATEGORIES IN WHICH WE HAVE NO ONGOING PROGRAMS. NOW, HAVING SAID THIS, HOWEVER, I AM NOT IMPLYING THAT WE GAINED A UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE BECAUSE IT IS PERHAPS TRUE THAT IN THE ABM FIELD WE HAD THE MORE DYNAMIC PROGRAM WHICH IS BEING ARRESTED AS A RESULT OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS.

WHAT I AM SAYING IS THAT THIS AGREEMENT HAS BEEN MADE THROUGH A LONG PROCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS; THAT THIS WEEK, WHILE OUR DELEGATION WAS WORKING AROUND THE CLOCK IN HELSINKI, THE PRESIDENT MET WITH THE SOVIET LEADERS EXTENSIVELY AND SOME MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN DELEGATION HAD EXTENSIVE TALKS WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SMIRNOFF AND FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO TO RESOLVE THOSE ISSUES THAT REQUIRED A PRIMARILY POLITICAL DECISION.

THE REASON IT WAS POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE SUCH AN

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The naked cities

NIXON KICKS MISSILE DEFENCES OUT OF TOWN TO SHOW THE RUSSIANS 'WE MEAN PEACE'

ROSS MARK: Washington, Friday

A SUBSTANTIALLY modified version of the Sentinel anti-ballistic missile system was given the go-ahead by President Nixon today.

For £2,500 million Americans are to get full protection for their inter-continental ballistic missile sites and nuclear bomber bases . . . and no defence for the cities.

In fact, Mr. Nixon made it quite plain that cities will remain unprotected to show America's peaceful intention.

The Sentinel system comprises nuclear-tipped rockets which can intercept incoming warheads 200 to 400 miles high.

A second line of missiles will be able to intercept any warheads which

bypass the first line of defence. Because the system is not impregnable, and because the fall-out from successful interceptions might harm city populations, Sentinel is not suitable for city defence, the President said.

Sentinel — as inherited from the Johnson Administration — has been "modified so that its defensive intent is unmistakable." He went on:—

"I was concerned that a heavy missile defence system might look like the prelude to an offensive strategy threatening the Soviet deterrent."

CHINESE THREAT

Mr. Nixon said he decided to proceed immediately with the system to meet any possible missile threat from China by 1973, and added:—

"The first deployment must be made ready by 1973. If we delay a year now it might mean no deployment until 1975. That might be too late."



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Department of State

TELEGRAM

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THESE DOCUMENTS WILL SHOW THAT WE ARE NOT LAX IN THAT RESPECT. WE ARE CONSCIOUS OF OUR RESPONSIBILITIES.

NOW, AS HENRY SAID, THERE ARE TWO BASIC DOCUMENTS HERE, THE ABM TREATY AND THE INTERIM AGREEMENT WHICH, IN EFFECT, IS A NEGOTIATING FREEZE ARRANGEMENT TO HOLD THE SITUATION, TO PERMIT US TO HOPEFULLY NEGOTIATE A TREATY TO MATCH IN THE OFFENSIVE FIELD THE TREATY THAT WE HAVE SUCCEEDED IN NEGOTIATING IN THE DEFENSIVE FIELD.

IN THE DEFENSIVE FIELD, I WOULD URGE YOU TO LOOK VERY CAREFULLY AT THE LANGUAGE OF ARTICLE I WHICH LOOKS VERY GENERAL BUT TO MY MIND IS A MOST SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD IN RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO GREAT POWERS.

IN EFFECT, IT SAYS THAT NEITHER SIDE IS GOING TO TRY TO DEFEND ITS NATIONWIDE TERRITORY. THIS IS AN ADMISSION OF TREMENDOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE, I BELIEVE, RECOGNITION THAT THE DETERRENT FORCES OF BOTH SIDES ARE NOT GOING TO BE CHALLENGED.

DECLASSIFIED
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Nixon trims defence plan

From PETER YOUNGHUSBAND

WASHINGTON, Friday

PRESIDENT NIXON gave the go-ahead today to an anti-ballistic missile system against nuclear attack by Russia or Red China.

It is a lot smaller and cheaper than the 'shield' Lyndon Johnson planned, but the decision still brought a wave of political criticism down on Nixon's head and ended his Presidential honeymoon.

He said the system would be as small as possible — balanced between his responsibility to maintain the country's security and the need to avoid scaring the Russians into believing the U.S. had an offensive in mind.

Halved

The modified screen, costing about half the £2,700 million estimate for the original, will protect attack missile bases, not cities.

In other words, it is accepted that Russia has the potential to wipe out most of the population of America. What must be ensured is that the United States can strike back and wipe out most of Russia.

The President said he did not think there would be a Summit meeting between him and Russian leaders in the near future.

On Vietnam he said that the Communists would get no further warning of any U.S. response to their offensive. 'My policy as President will be to issue a warning only once,' he said.

DAILY MAIL

March 15

DECLASSIFIED

MISSILE SCREEN IS SLASHED BY NIXON

PRESIDENT Richard Nixon announced plans yesterday for a severe cut-back in America's Sentinel anti-missile system.

He made this new dramatic move to slow down the nuclear arms race a day after the Senate approved ratification of the treaty to stop the spread of weapons.

His decision will mean abandoning any idea of protecting the major US cities from an all-out nuclear attack.

Instead, America will

From JOHN SMITH
in Washington

concentrate on defending her underground bases which house America's own deterrent, the mighty Minutemen missiles.

The decision is the biggest and the most crucial that Nixon has yet had to take as President.

He had been under pressure to build a full-scale system, costing about £2,500,000,000, which would

have dotted America with about twenty anti-missile bases

At the same time, critics argued that this would be ineffective, encourage the arms race, hamper disarmament talks and put cities in danger of an accidental nuclear explosion.

The compromise decision Nixon has made is bound to come under fire from both sides in Congress.

Nixon described his "modified" system at a Press conference as a safeguard against attack by China during the next ten years and a shield against any Soviet attack

Review

America's first two Sentinel bases are expected to be completed by 1973.

But there will be a yearly review of the new system.

ON VIETNAM, Nixon said that there would be no further warnings about the current escalation of the war

He warned early this month that there would be an "appropriate military response" if the shelling of South Vietnamese cities continued

DAILY MIRROR

March 15

DECLASSIFIED

Nixon sanctions modified

Sentinel ABM system

BY J. D. S. GRAHAM

WASHINGTON, March 14.

PRESIDENT NIXON announced to-day that the U.S. will continue to set up an anti-ballistic missile defence system. Defences will be placed around America's offensive missile sites (that is the ICBM silos), and the total cost will be \$6,000m-\$7,000m.

At a Press conference, the President called his plan a "safeguard programme," and gave it three aims:

- 1—To protect America's land-based retaliatory forces against a direct attack by the Soviet Union
- 2—To defend the population against the kind of nuclear attack which Communist China is likely to be able to mount within the next ten years and
- 3—To guard against the possibility of "irrational or accidental attacks" from either China or the Soviet Union, or indeed from any source.

The first deployment covers only two missile sites, in Montana and North Dakota, and the first of these should be completed by 1973. According to Mr. Nixon, this should be enough to meet the threat from China that American intelligence services say will exist by then.

There is certain to be a terrific battle in Congress. Mr. Nixon himself conceded that there would be "a very spirited debate and a very close vote," but reckoned that he had a good chance of getting his way.

Senator after Senator to-day came out very strongly against it. Eugene McCarthy called it "the President's first mistake." William



Mr. Nixon—between two extremes.

Proxmire, chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, vowed to do all he could to stop deployment. William Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, was very disappointed. Charles Percy, Republican Senator from Illinois, deeply regretted the decision. Against these there were, of course, supporters of the President. The most vociferous of them was Barry Goldwater, Senator from Arizona. He fully accepted the President's line that it was "in the best interests of American security."

What Mr. Nixon has done is to

take a stand between the two extremes of full heavy deployment to defend the country's cities, and cancellation of all work other than research and development. In all probability, both of these were unfeasible, politically and strategically.

He has also made a fundamental change from the system approved by President Johnson, which was just starting to be set up when the public outcry began some weeks ago. This was designed to give direct protection to cities.

The new deployment around missile sites is known as point defence, and its intention is to preserve America's second strike capacity—ensuring, in other words, that the U.S. retaliatory strength is a sufficient deterrent to an enemy strike in the first place. In the language of the strategic argument, this means a change from "damage limitation" to "assured destruction."

This is a major change. Mr. Nixon explained that he took it because "it is not now within our power" to give complete protection against a major nuclear attack. He said he and his advisers considered the heaviest defence system that could possibly be deployed and discovered, like others before them, that it could still not prevent "a catastrophic level of U.S. fatalities."

In addition, it might have looked, according to Mr. Nixon, like the prelude to an offensive strategy threatening the Russian deterrent.

On this point the President was most emphatic. He claimed that the defensive nature of his new system would in no way hinder the effort of the Americans and the Russians to get together and discuss arms limitation: "The Soviet Union cannot interpret this as escalating the arms race."

However, there seems little question that an ABM system, with all that it implies, is now here to stay in the U.S.

FINANCIAL TIMES

March 15

Sentinel role reduced by Nixon

From RICHARD SCOTT : Washington, March 14

President Nixon announced today that he had decided to deploy the Sentinel anti-missile system on a "substantially modified" basis. He made the formal statement following a two-hour meeting with Congressional leaders.

The Sentinel system devised under the Johnson Administration, he said, would be modified to concentrate on the defence of American strategic missile sites and bomber bases instead of cities. It would be a phased programme in which the first of two Sentinel missile systems would be operational by 1973.

In determining the pace at which the Sentinel programme would be deployed, account would be taken of the current extent of the potential threat to the United States, of the diplomatic scene, including particularly progress in arms control talks, and of technological developments in the anti-missile field.

The President claimed that, in coming to today's decision, he had not forgotten his pledge to make every effort to move from the area of confrontation to that of negotiation. He had directed

Unmistakable

He emphasised that this modified system had been designed so that its defensive character and intent were unmistakable. Because of this, he believed that Moscow's interest in arms control talks would be increased rather than decreased by his decision today.

The first deployment would cover two Minuteman missile sites. (The House Republican leader, Mr Gerald Ford, said later that they would be at Malmstrom in Montana and Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota.) The first of these would be completed by 1973.

If he had agreed to defer deployment, he said, the Sentinel programme would have been put back by two years; and this was a security risk that he could

Turn to back page, col. 1

No comment in Moscow

Moscow, March 14

Moscow Radio tonight reported Mr Nixon's decision to go ahead with the deployment of the Sentinel missile system and said the move had been made "after long arguments." It made no other comment.—Reuter.

his foreign intelligence advisory board to make a yearly assessment of the threat facing the US. Each phase in the deployment of Sentinel "will be reviewed to ensure that we are doing as much as necessary but no more than required by the threat existing at that time."

GUARDIAN

March 15

DECLASSIFIED

Sentinel role reduced by Nixon

Continued from page 1

not take. Mr Nixon pointed out that the Russians had already deployed an ABM system which protected a wide area around Moscow; 67 Golosh ABM's were already in place and the deployment of others was proceeding. The American ABM capability would only match that of Russia today in four years time.

Large missiles

The Russians were also proceeding with the deployment of very large missiles with warheads capable of destroying our hardened Minuteman forces. They had been substantially increasing the size of their submarine-launched missile force and they appeared to be developing a semi-orbital nuclear weapons system (the incredible accuracy with which the Apollo 9 spacecraft was brought down at a different site gives solemn

warning about the threat of an orbiting H-bomb.

The modified Sentinel system, Mr Nixon said, would provide for local defence of selected Minuteman sites and an area defence designed of the country's bomber bases, and command and communications centres. Specifically, it would: 1, protect America's land-based retaliatory forces against a direct attack by Russia; 2, defend the American people against a Chinese nuclear attack throughout the next decade, and 3, give protection against an accidental or irrational attack from any source. The modified system was essentially a "safeguard programme."

The President explained that he had rejected the alternative of deploying Sentinel for the defence of the country's major cities because even a "thick" ABM system could not achieve such protection.

Under the old plan there were to be ABM sites around Boston,

Chicago, New York, Salt Lake City, Detroit, Seattle, Honolulu, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Dallas, Texas, and Albany, Georgia.

Also, said Mr Nixon, it might look provocative to the Russians by seeming to threaten their deterrent. The only way to protect America's cities, he said, was to prevent war. And he believed that the modified Sentinel system would contribute to the prevention of war by strengthening the American deterrent.

Ruled out

He said that he had also ruled out these suggested alternatives to an ABM:—1, an increase in US offensive missile and bomber strength, for this would only marginally increase the American deterrent while appearing to threaten the Soviet deterrent, thus stimulating an arms race; and 2, an even further hardening

of the existing US Minuteman sites, for by itself this would not be enough to protect them "against foreseeable advances in the accuracy of Soviet offensive forces."

The present estimate of the cost of the modified Sentinel system is \$6,000-\$7,000 millions. Asked whether he could contemplate reversing today's decision on the deployment of Sentinel in the event of progress in arms control talks with the Russians Mr Nixon said that such talks would be limited to freezing missile production not to cutting back the number of existing missiles.

GUARDIAN (Cont)

A technical change on ABMs

President Nixon's announcement yesterday on the Sentinel anti-ballistic missile system is his first major policy decision. It has gone off far less smoothly than he hoped. After a series of formal consultations with the National Security Council, and Congressional leaders he was all ready to divulge it last Monday. Then a sudden public outcry, which threatened to end the honeymoon he has so far enjoyed, forced him to reconsider hastily. The result is yesterday's compromise, which will probably calm public alarm, yet leave Pentagon hardliners not too disappointed.

Instead of building the new missile sites around a selected group of cities, Mr Nixon now intends to build only two, neither of them near cities. They will defend two of the offensive Minuteman rocket sites. The cost of the system, at least in the early stages, will be slightly less than the amount budgeted by Mr Johnson. At the same time, the new ABM system will give the Pentagon the technical knowledge on which

a major and financially crippling extension could be built later. In this sense there is no modification of Mr Johnson's plans.

The Russian chiefs of staff who have been pressing for an accelerated arms programme to allow the Soviet Union to "catch up" with the Americans will be able to justify themselves by pointing to Mr Nixon's decision. For it implies that Mr Nixon's recent verbal shift from talk of nuclear "superiority" to "sufficiency" means nothing. Both sides of course already have "parity" in that each can do unacceptable damage to the other. Yet the Americans, the historic leaders in the nuclear race, still want to feel they are ahead. Mr Nixon's new move does not step up the race because that had already been done by Mr Johnson. But it does show that though he is holding back the extreme hardliners he is not yet going to slow it down. No amount of adjectives, whether "cautious," "measured" or "modified" can disguise that fact.

GUARDIAN

March 15 1969

DECLASSIFIED

Changes in American missiles system

From LOUIS HEREN—

Washington, March 14

President Nixon today announced his decision to proceed with the construction of an anti-ballistic missile (A.B.M.) system. It would be substantially modified, and would not complicate an agreement with the Soviet Union on the limitation of strategic weapons.

Mr. Nixon told his press conference that the decision was vital for the security and defence of the United States and the peace of the world. It was a safeguard programme which would not provide defence for cities.

There was no way of defending cities without unacceptable loss of life. The only way to save lives was to prevent war, and therefore the system would defend the deterrent. A credible deterrent could be ensured by defending inter-continental ballistic missile sites in Montana and North Dakota.

He had considered all the alternatives, and had decided against increasing the offensive capacity, because that would have been provocative. Mr. Nixon said the Russians had always given first priority to defence. They could not mistake the defensive role of the new American system.

In a statement issued before his press conference, the President said that deployment would be confined to two sites, and the first would not be completed before 1973.

Moscow already protected

The statement was closely reasoned, and on the whole persuasive. Mr. Nixon said that national security required the development and construction of an A.B.M. system in a carefully phased programme, and the modified system had been designed so that its defensive intent was unmistakable. The objectives were: Protection of land-based retaliatory forces against a direct Soviet attack.

Defence of the American people against a Chinese attack.

Protection against the possibility of accidental attacks from any source.

Giving up all construction of missile defence sites posed too many risks, Mr. Nixon said.

The Soviet Union had already deployed a system which gave some protection to the Moscow area, the President said. It was also continuing the deployment of missiles capable of destroying hardened Minuteman silos. The Russian submarine missile force was also being increased, and a semi-orbital nuclear weapon was apparently being developed.

In addition, the Chinese threat and the danger of accidental attack could not be ignored, he said.

The system to be deployed would use components developed for the Sentinel programme, but only selected missile and bomber bases and command and control authorities would be protected. The total cost would be less than \$7,000m. (nearly £3,000m.), but the budgetary request for the coming year would be reduced by about half.

"I have taken cognizance of the view that beginning construction of a United States ballistic missile defence would complicate an agreement on strategic arms with the Soviet Union", Mr. Nixon said.

"I do not believe that the evidence of the recent past bears out this contention. The Soviet interest in strategic talks was not deterred by the decision of the previous Administration to deploy the Sentinel A.B.M. system. In fact, it was formally announced shortly afterwards.

"I believe that the modifications we have made in the previous programme will give the Soviet Union even less reason to view our defence effort as an obstacle to talks. Moreover, I wish to emphasize that, in any arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union, the United States will be fully prepared to discuss limitations on defensive as well as offensive weapons. . .

"I have weighed all these factors. I am deeply sympathetic to the concerns of private citizens and members of Congress that we do only that which is necessary for national security."

Mr. David Packard, the Deputy Defence Secretary, said afterwards, that the new system, to be known as Safeguard, could consist eventually of 12 sites. It resembled the Sentinel system in that area protection would be provided by long-range Spartan and short-range Sprint missiles. None would be sited near a city, except for Washington which was the national command authority.

Clearing the decks and leading article, page 11.

TIMES

March 15

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ANTI-MISSILE CAUTION

President Nixon's decision to deploy only two anti-ballistic missile sites by 1973 amounts to an extension of the research and development which has been going on for four years. It gives those who are working on the A.B.M. system some hardware with which to work on the operational problems of the Sentinel and Sprint systems, but it leaves all his options open in future dealings with the Russians. It will be open to Mr. Nixon to slow down or to speed up the programme depending on Russian actions in the anti-ballistic missile field. He will have, in the plan for two sites, a bargaining counter when he goes to Moscow, nor would he be precluded from agreeing with the Russians to freeze all such development at the present state of the art.

The type of system that his announcement envisages shows that the President has been influenced by the public criticism of the past few months—Congress, which originally forced A.B.M. research on Mr. McNamara, is now most reluctant to proceed to deployment, and there has been an outcry against the siting of the system near cities lest it should invite attack as well as risking accidents. The two sites are in fact designed solely to defend the deterrent—to harden the sites from which America's second strike would partly come—and not many of them. This will help to pacify the Pentagon while disposing of the idea that Sentinel could really provide even a "thin screen" of defence for the civil population. Even so, the taxpayer faces a stiff bill.

Though many Americans will question the wisdom of such a quarter-way house, the President has to look at the matter in a broad context. If only the two super-powers were involved, he might well be able to agree with the Russians to avoid the A.B.M. phase of the nuclear arms

race altogether, since it is expensive without promising real defence, and endangers fail-safe procedures.

But the Russians are unlikely to make their decision on American plans. These do not affect their own second strike capacity. Their decision will depend much more upon their assessment of the threat to them of Chinese nuclear attack, and the capacity of their own A.B.M. system, on which they have been marking time for some years, to reduce it.

China may, as some argue, be as ready to conform rationally to the rules of the nuclear game as the super-powers, but what matters is whether the Kremlin thinks China is capable of rash and unpredictable actions. To Russia, China's motives are as unfathomable and frightening as they are to the rest of the West, and Chinese forces are nearer. If the Russian general staff decide that their A.B.M. system will prevent China's still unsophisticated missiles from getting through in any quantity they will probably go ahead with it. A domino effect then seems certain. Whatever American feelings are now, public opinion will not long be content with anything less than Russia has got. No president could long resist the full deployment of the Sentinel system, or its later versions.

It is therefore all the more important that a Russian-American consultation should take place. The way is open for a frank examination by the two super-powers of the extent to which China's nuclear development does force them, if at all, into this new arms race. Further, even if they feel they must develop A.B.M. systems, they can at least agree on a minimum deployment and above all on measures to prevent such systems from weakening present fail-safe procedures and replacing human decisions, or hot-line warnings, by a computerized hair-trigger on the nuclear bomb.

TIMES

March 15

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Nixon gives go-ahead to 'Sentinel'

By STEPHEN BARBER
in Washington

PRESIDENT NIXON is to proceed with a "modified" version of the much-criticised Sentinel anti-ballistic missile shield. It will guard offensive missile installations rather than large cities though Washington will be protected.

He described the new scheme as a "safeguard programme—a defensive system only." Russia, told in advance, had accepted this so the scheme would "in no way delay progress towards arms talks."

The system, eventually to cost \$6,000 million (£2,500 million), will initially involve two Minuteman missile sites in the mountains of Montana and North Dakota, and will take until 1973 to complete.

The programme will be subject to annual review, taking into account technical developments, the nature of the enemy threat and the "diplomatic context."

First big decision

The Sentinel is the first major decision the new Administration has made. Mr. Nixon took his time coming to it, admitting it had "not been easy," but now seems calm and relaxed, confident that Congress will find the funds after "very spirited debate and a very close vote."

Sentinel is a two-pronged defence against incoming missiles and was, at first, ostensibly to ward off a Chinese attack. The first stage is Spartan, a long-range missile carrying a nuclear warhead. If it failed to neutralise an enemy missile with its own nuclear explosion, Sprint, a short-range but very fast rocket, would "have a go."

Mixed reactions

Washington's reactions were predictably mixed. Senator Eugene McCarthy, last year's "peace" contender for the Democratic Presidential nomination, called it "Nixon's first mistake."

Senator Edward Kennedy blamed Mr. Nixon for "missing an important opportunity to advance the cause of peace." It was a case of "weapons" systems making policy instead of policy making weapons systems."

Mr. Nixon pointed out that expert studies showed that even the so-called thick defence systems could not prevent the loss of 30 million to 40 million lives in an all-out nuclear attack.

He agreed that Sentinel left urban populations exposed, but "Although every instinct motivates me to provide the American people with complete protection against major nuclear attack, it is not now within our power to do so."

"Doves" Attack over Vietnam
—P18

Editorial Comment—P12

DAILY TELEGRAPH

March 15

DECLASSIFIED

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MISSILE RACE, OR TALK?

PRESIDENT NIXON'S decision to go ahead, albeit slowly with a "thin" anti-missile screen is a fateful one. Although he describes it as "modified" it will cost, £2,500-2,900 million, which is rather more than the system that President JOHNSON authorised 18 months ago. This is presumably due to the cost of the "modifications," which are intended to make its "defensive intent" unmistakable. This extra "defensiveness" in a system which is in any case purely defensive must include the special arrangements for regular review with an eye to reduction if circumstances warrant. The function is the same as the system authorised by President JOHNSON: to intercept any missiles of the less sophisticated kind that China is likely to have during the next decade, and to protect American launchers from direct Russian attack.

Mr. NIXON wisely makes no effort to gloss over the seriousness of his decision. He announced more frankly than his predecessor the fact that the system also has a limited anti-Russian protective function. It seems also that the revision can, if necessary, be upwards as well as downwards. The announcement will certainly bring the honeymoon phase of Mr. NIXON'S Presidency to an abrupt and painful end. Mounting opposition to the anti-missile system has already led to a postponement of many months in the now irrevocable decision to make a start. The main arguments have been that it is a major escalation in the missile race, as a result of which Russia will build more multiple-headed missiles of the type to which President JOHNSON committed America, leading to stronger American defences, leading to more Russian missiles and stronger Russian defences, and so on ad infinitum.

Many experts maintain that the screen is ineffectual. Mr. NIXON and his advisers evidently disagree, although they do not claim complete protection, even against China. There will be angry complaints that Mr. NIXON is queering the pitch for the negotiations on missiles and other Super Power themes about which both sides have been talking so much lately. Yet Mr. NIXON has only done, with the maximum delay, on the minimum scale, what Russia has now been doing for four years. Mr. JOHNSON delayed as long as possible in the hope of persuading the Russians to pause, or even slow down, and negotiate. Instead they have steadily increased the rate of their building. In fact the Russians, finding that they are not to be allowed to go on stealing marches, are much more likely to accept realistic negotiations. America's readiness to go to the limit in meeting Russia's legitimate demands has been further demonstrated by her ratification of the non-proliferation treaty, which is immensely to Russia's advantage in that it will greatly impede the development of a united Europe with its own nuclear weapons and also hamper Western European nuclear industrial and technical development.

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Shield, not spear

ONE must of course respect the lamentations of those who, from the best motives, deplore President Nixon's decision to go ahead after all with a modified £2,500 million version of the controversial anti-ballistic missile shield. No act which might lessen the prospects of a détente between Washington and Moscow can be welcomed without reserve. Nor can any step which might throw a serious strain on America's financial stability in the crucial years ahead. The security of the West in peacetime depends on the health of the American dollar almost as much as on the threat of the American deterrent.

Finally, a purely moral repugnance is understandable against any more vast expenditure going on the arms' front at a time when the home fronts—including America's—are strewn with social programmes left incomplete for lack of funds.

Yet having accepted all these reservations, it is still difficult to argue with the President's policy. By starting on only two nuclear shield projects, both designed to protect America's own missile sites instead of cities, and the first to be finished only in 1973, President

Nixon has combined a maximum of basic military security for America (and Europe) with a minimum of diplomatic provocation of Russia.

Nor should too much be made of the "provocation" argument. Too often and too long has the West supposed that sweet reason and turning the other cheek are the most effective ways of dealing with the Kremlin. The Russians have precious little respect for earnest "do-gooders" of the familiar Left-wing stamp and none at all for weaklings. As President Nixon pointed out, when his predecessor first launched the American anti-missile project as such, the response from Moscow was not defiance but overtures for strategic talks.

With his clear signal to the Soviet Union that work on even these first two American nuclear shields could be reviewed at any time in the light of the international situation, an easy and honourable path has been left open for further contacts.

All in all, this first major decision of Nixon's presidency should be rated as neither dovish nor hawkish. It is rather the American eagle at its responsible best.

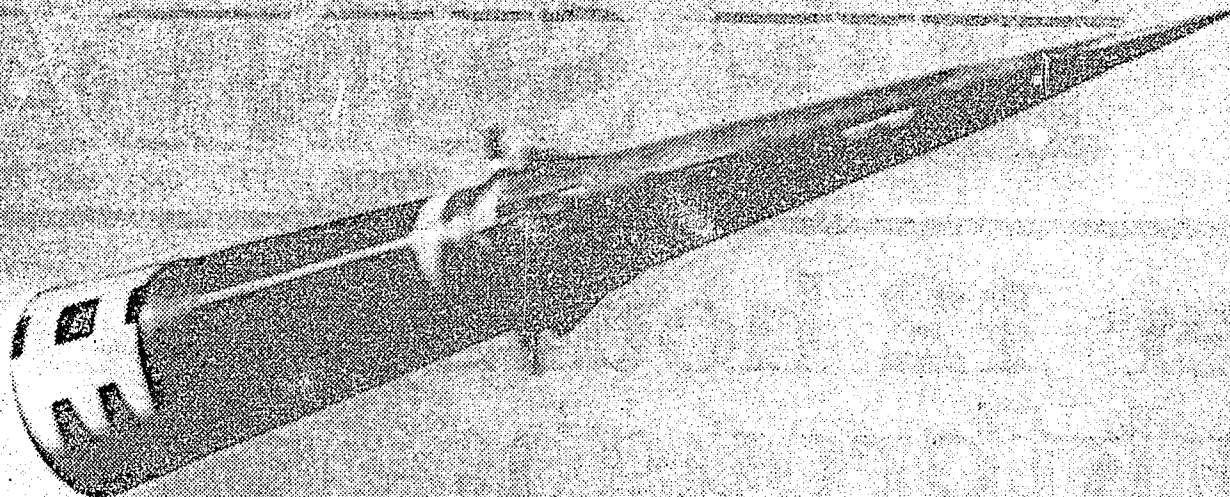
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THE SUNDAY TIMES, 16 MARCH 1969



The Sprint missile which forms the final stage of the new American Safeguard system

ABM

Will it be the Nixon Administration's Biggest Mistake?

By Cal McCrystal in Washington and Robert Hunter in London

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A B M system will be built so that it will have less obvious impact on each year's defence budget.

And, clearly, he has taken account of the public outcry against siting nuclear missiles in the suburbs of big cities.

Apparently, Americans feel more threatened by the idea of their own nuclear weapons buried in the back garden than by the prospect of the Chinese missile onslaught against which the A B M is supposed to protect them.

In the process of meeting his critics part way, Mr Nixon has had to find a new argument to justify building an A B M system at all. This is nothing new: for years, the strong A B M lobby in the Pentagon and American industry has changed its line repeatedly as succeeding arguments have been demolished by the system's opponents.

Now the President has become concerned about protecting America's ability to absorb a nuclear attack from the Soviet Union and still strike back. And he continues the old argument that American cities should be protected against the prospect of a Chinese nuclear attack during the 1970s.

But the first of these arguments implies that arms control talks with the Soviet Union will fail although it is the Russians, and not the Americans, who have been pressing for these talks to begin.

In fact, Mr Nixon's decision on Friday has introduced new uncertainties, however minor at first, into the dangerous equations of nuclear strategy. And these uncertainties are the worst threats to the success of talks on ending the arms race.

As for protecting cities against the Chinese, this has never been convincing. It assumes that China would be mad enough to attack the US despite the assurance of total destruction in return. Anyway, the two projected installations would have to be joined by others to give cities like San Francisco real protection against Chinese missiles.

And if the Safeguard system is expanded to give this protection against China, it will complicate America's relations with Russia. The success of mutual deterrence depends on both Russian and American cities being vulnerable to retaliatory attack. The risk is that Moscow will interpret American preparations for defence against China as preparations to attack Russia with impunity.

But if the strategic arguments for Safeguard are so tenuous, why has Mr Nixon decided to go ahead? First of all, he has followed the political instincts of a life-time compromise. From his point of view, he does indeed think he has met the opposition half way, even though this is little comfort to anyone who has

PRESIDENT NIXON'S decision to go ahead with a "modified" version of the Sentinel anti-ballistic missile system seems likely to cause a major political storm in the United States. It could seriously damage, if not rupture, his delicate good relations with the Democrat-controlled Congress. It is his first decision of indisputably major historical importance, and it may also be his first serious mistake.

At first, the President's carefully written statement was taken at face value. Early reports in London accepted Mr Nixon's claim to have reduced American commitment to the super-expensive project, which could cost more than the moon programme—and, according to some of its critics, could push the arms race with the Soviet Union off on yet another spiral.

But on closer analysis, it appears that Mr Nixon is thinking in terms of an A B M system—already dubbed "Safeguard"—that will be larger than the Sentinel system which ran into steadily-mounting Congressional resistance during the past few weeks.

There will be a hard fight later this year when the Nixon plan comes up for Congressional approval.

Safeguard, Nixon said, will begin with only two installations, instead of the 15 of Sentinel, and they will be placed around offensive missile bases in the remote parts of Montana and North Dakota, instead of round cities like Boston and San Francisco.

Essentially, Safeguard will use the same components as those designed for Sentinel. Both systems are fantastically elaborate combinations of radar networks and nuclear missiles designed to destroy attacking missiles in flight.

But will Safeguard remain at only two installations? Shortly after the President's statement, Deputy Secretary of Defence David Packard said that the system could run to 12 installations.

Mr Nixon also admitted that his new programme will cost \$7,000 million, \$2,000 million more than the one it replaces. All he has really done is to spread out the period over which the

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watched as other fledgling weapons programmes have grown to monstrous proportions.

He must also consider what is to replace the manned space-flight programme in the American economy. And he has had a life-long pre-occupation with military strength and security that was particularly evident in his attacks on the Johnson Administration's defence policies during the recent Presidential campaign.

The rationale Mr Nixon has given for his decision is in some aspects so contradictory that many politicians in Washington believe it is little more than a cover for a surrender to pressures from the military-industrial lobby.

This lobby has been even more active than usual. A month ago, for example, the Washington Post uncovered a suggestion by the Secretary of the Army, Mr Stanley Amor, to use the taxpayer's own money, and military personnel to do propaganda for the A B M. And it quoted from a long memorandum written by Lieutenant-General Alfred Starbird, manager of Sentinel, laying out a "master plan" for propaganda, including special efforts directed at recalcitrant Senators and Congressmen.

The Pentagon's military leaders, and the aerospace firms, are undoubtedly content with the very promising half-loaf the President has given

them. They support any A B M system as long as this means that contracts are awarded, technicians taken on, and the whole momentum of Government spending is swung into line behind the project.

This lobby's goal is a full A B M system, directed also against a Russian attack on American cities, at the cost of \$100,000 million or more. And precedent points to their having their way, as soon as the limited Safeguard programme is firmly launched.

The group of more than 50 Senators who opposed the Sentinel programme, led by Senator Edward Kennedy, have not yet conceded defeat. But they admit that Mr Nixon's cleverly and carefully worded presentation on Friday will make their task much more difficult when the Safeguard programme comes up for authorisation and funding later in the year. Yet even if the President wins this one he will lose many badly-needed friends on Capitol Hill.

One Senator declared that Mr Nixon's announcement, was "horrifying and primitive." And although Senator J. W. Fulbright, a vocal critic of A B M, admitted that the President "went out of his way to be conciliatory," there are, for the first time since Mr Johnson returned to Texas, real signs of tension between the White House and Capitol Hill.

The President has opened the US Treasury to yet one more raid on resources that are desperately needed for pressing domestic problems. And if past form is any guide, the A B M lobby will find yet more reasons to push on with a "creeping commitment" to a bigger and more expensive A B M system. As Senator Symington, of Missouri, has argued, the precedents for spending on weapons systems indicate the cost of a full A B M system would be above \$400,000 million—eight times more than the race to the moon.

Worse than this, Mr Nixon has, in fact, increased the risks that this generation will not find a way out of the nuclear arms race. As James Reston of the New York Times has written, the initials A B M could come to stand for "Administration's Biggest Mistake."

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Russia still wants talks on missiles

from DEV MURARKA

Moscow, 15 March

SOVIET eagerness for talks with the Americans on the abolition of ballistic missile systems has not been affected by President Nixon's decision to deploy the Sentinel anti-ballistic missile system on a limited scale.

Though the Russians do not particularly welcome the decision, *Pravda* today quoted President Nixon as saying it would not make disarmament negotiations any more difficult, obviously concurring with this analysis.

There are no indications here that a summit meeting is in the offing but President Nixon's decision has cleared the air for the new United States administration to establish preliminary contacts with Moscow with a view to negotiations on the whole range of missile weapons.

NORA BELOFF reports from Washington: President Nixon's masterly handling of his decision to redeploy Sentinel anti-ballistic missiles round missile cites rather than cities, made it look like a middle-of-the-way compromise. But there is no doubt that it is the 'hawks' and not the 'doves' who are rejoicing.

The defenders of the ABM are in fundamental agreement with its most inveterate opponents that the decision leaves the new weapon system intact.

The experts claim the missiles will still provide 'city area defence.' President Nixon's decision to allow one cluster round Washington DC is being interpreted at the Pentagon as an indication that he wishes 'to preserve continuity in the decision-making process.'

If the anti-missile system can preserve the Washington apparatus, this implicitly revives the case for redeploying the system to protect the other major American cities.

There is no change in the scale or the nature of the Sentinel's industrial and construction programme.

OBSERVER

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A mindless missile race

Hugh Hanning examines new American evidence

AS MR NIXON pushes the arms race into the anti-missile era, a new publication throws light on the mindless momentum which has kept the race going.

Its author, Dr George W. Rathjens, was until last summer Director of the Systems Evaluation Division of the Institute for Defense Analyses. He mercilessly exposes the flimsiness of evidence on which some of the biggest strategic decisions have been taken.

He shows how the arms race was slowing down under the Kennedy Administration and the early Johnson Administration, only to accelerate in the past three years. The US strategic budget dropped from \$11,000 millions in 1962 to less than \$7,000 millions in 1966. Nearly all the big procurement decisions at that time were negative: no B-70 bombers; no rail-borne Minutemen; no Skybolt; no ABM system.

Then followed the era of "over-reaction." Russia, fearing the US was going ahead with the B-70, responded to a non-existent threat by building the Tallinn air defence system. The United States—which subsequently decided against the B-70—assumed the Tallinn system was a defence against missiles. This, as Rathjens pointed out, was quite wrong.

"The prevailing view in the US Intelligence community today is that the Tallinn System is an anti-aircraft system, with no significant anti-ballistic defence capability." In the meanwhile, however, it was the turn of the US to "over-react" with pressure for an ABM system of its own.

This process—a sort of "chain over-reaction"—has a

momentum of its own. The Tallinn deployment continued long after it became clear that no operational B-70 force would ever be built. US Congressmen could not defer the Sentinel decision even after it became evident that the Chinese threat was not developing as rapidly as had been feared.

And it is now clear that Russia never planned the extensive ABM system which prompted the US to push on with its Poseidon and Minuteman III programmes.

Mr Rathjens's account would explain some of the obscurities in the latest decision on Sentinel. The spectre of China, for instance, seems completely bogus in the context of the proposed Sentinel deployment.

Either China has a rational Government or—as Washington fears—she has an irrational one. If it is rational, it will be deterred by the 656 missiles to the US Polaris fleet. If it is irrational, the projected deployment of Sentinel has absolutely no relevance. It is not designed to protect people, but to protect missiles. And protection of missiles has no purpose against an irrational Government.

President Nixon might be well advised to stress these points when he goes to Moscow later this year. If the Russians reply that they aim to protect the whole Russian population, he could usefully produce the very same statistics which have convinced even his military advisers that such a programme would be literally ruinous even if remotely practicable.

Even the limited strategic defence programme envisaged

by the United States, Rathjens estimates, will cost more than \$10,000 millions a year—and that is just an appetiser.

Rathjens gives a warning that "if one considers only the programmes now under way and under serious consideration," strategic forces can be expected to cost between \$12,000 millions and \$25,000 millions by the early 1970s. The latter figure, which of course excludes the whole range of Vietnam-type warfare, is five times the entire British defence budget. Even so, "by the late 1970s costs could be even higher."

Rathjens notes that a ban on ABMs should be quite easy to police—the will is there. It would certainly be far simpler than attempting to ban the NIRV, the multiple-headed missile which has given such an advantage to the offensive.

He also believes it is time to ask Russia for an annual defence "posture statement" such as the US has issued for many years. Mutual enlightenment, he believes, would reduce the disastrous habit of "over-reaction."

The Russians, now that they have made good their deficiencies in quality of radar and quantity of missiles, should be ready to move into a new era of trust based on strength.

This book carries the approval of such experts as ex-Defence Secretary McNamara, Lincoln Bloomfield, Headley Donovan, George Kistiakowsky, Marshall Shulman and General Matthew Ridgway.

"The Future of the Strategic Arms Race: Options for the 1970s," by Dr George W. Rathjens. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

GUARDIAN

March 17

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Nixon goes back to Rule 1— a deterrent is meant to deter

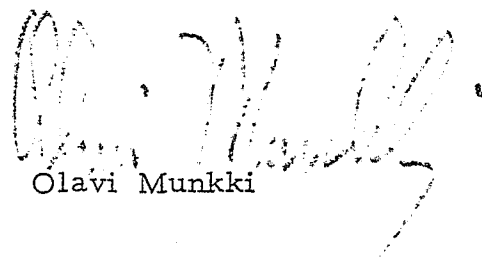
An American anti-ballistic missile system is seen by its supporters as an insurance against insanity, and by its detractors as an exercise comparable with building the pyramids. President Nixon has authorised a scheme to protect weapon sites only

BY JOHN GRAHAM, WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT

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results in limiting the armaments race and
to strengthen peace."

Please accept, Mr. Secretary, the renewed
assurances of my highest consideration.



Olavi Munkki

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Political pressure

LET your fancy roam free, and imagine for a moment that special cadres of commandos are undergoing highly sophisticated training right next to the towns and villages of England's green and pleasant land. They are learning particularly ungracious forms of man-to-man combat, for use in the fetid jungles of South-East Asia, in accordance with the Government's controversial East of Suez policy.

Suddenly the worthy citizens of Cheltenham and Leighton Buzzard object to this desecration, and start complaining to their local MPs. These gentlemen raise the matter in the House. They are joined by others, and in no time at all a full-scale debate is in motion. The National Press joins in, late as usual, and the whole matter of defence policy becomes the subject of raging argument.

The Cabinet goes into almost daily session. Position papers proliferate. Anyone with any pretence to expertise in matters of defence is asked for his opinion. Heroes of forgotten battles are summoned to Number Ten. Finally, after weeks of public and private agonising, the Prime Minister announces in a nation-wide television broadcast that the commando exercises will be stopped, and that the Government now has a new East-of-Suez policy.

If you will pardon the inexactitude, something like that has just happened in the United States. The details of President Nixon's announcement last Friday on anti-ballistic defence are well-known by now: how he chose the middle ground between building a heavy system all over the country and building nothing at all, and how he decided to move the defences away from the cities (where they would have theoretically protected people) to selected air force bases (where they will theoretically protect America's own nuclear weapons, the ICBMs and their warheads). Behind these details, however, are two fascinating phenomena: an astonishing concentration of political pressure, and a fundamental change in national strategy.

The political pressure began when work was started on the anti-ballistic missile defence that was designed by Lyndon Johnson and Robert McNamara. This was to place the necessary equipment to shoot down enemy missiles aimed at American cities, near the cities themselves. Some cities had been chosen, and work was more or less at the ground-breaking stage. It was called a "thin" system, aimed at the Chinese and not the Russians, and was to cost something like \$5,000m.

When the first list of cities was published, it was widely assumed that there would be an outcry from those which had not been chosen. To everyone's surprise, the outcry came instead from the cities where the anti-

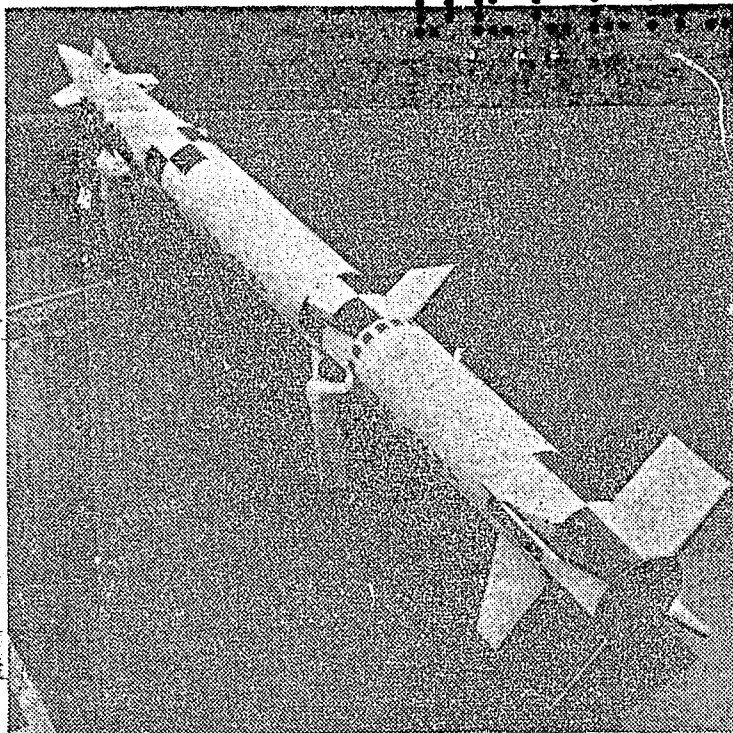
missile missiles were going to be parked. The local inhabitants, especially of Boston, began to lobby their Senators and Congressmen (Teddy Kennedy, among others). The lobby swelled, the Administration was forced to take notice, and the resulting controversy led to the change of direction formally adopted by Mr. Nixon on Friday.

Now the local anxiety was partly that the close presence of nuclear bombs would lower the tone of the neighbourhood, if not level the neighbourhood itself. After all, nuclear bombs are dangerous animals, and the fact that none has gone off accidentally in the last 24 years is no guarantee for the future. But this was only part of the story.

The second element of fear was that the construction of defences in or near cities would be a "thin" system only temporarily, that in fact it was merely a prelude to a "thick" system. A thick system would be an attempt not only to give "area defence" for the whole U.S., but also "point defence" for all cities. Obviously this would be no mean undertaking. The political battles it would engender inside the U.S. would be nobody's business; the strategic implications are incalculable; and the cost would be so great that the figures are almost meaningless. Senator Symington, who is considered something of a specialist in defence, says it could cost \$400,000m.

Path plotted by computer

At this point in the argument I can no longer, I fear, dodge the technicalities. In the simplest terms, the present American ABM system has four parts: radars of a special kind, computers of a special kind, long-range intercepting missiles called Spartans, and short-range ones called Sprints. The radars find an enemy missile coming for you. The computers plot its path and give your own missiles a path, and you fire the Spartan, hoping to neutralise the enemy missile by exploding near it and outside the atmosphere. If the Spartan misses, you fire the Sprint, which is fantastically speedy, hoping to catch the enemy inside the atmosphere. The Spartan has a range of about 400 miles, but the



SPARTAN: long-range interceptor and partner to Sprint

Pentagon claims only 25 miles for the Sprint. The Sprint can, however, operate in as short a distance as 100,000 feet.

It is the short range of the Sprint that is the key to much of the present argument. With a mere 25 miles to play with, you are clearly going to need a great many Sprints to protect America's cities. (This is assuming that the things work, and that they can detect decoys and other fooling devices that the enemy might send. Spartans and Sprints have both been tested, and have worked well, but not, naturally, under realistic conditions.)

It so happens that the ABM deployment that President Nixon discarded did not have any Sprints near cities . . . they were for defending radar sites and ICBM silos. But once the Spartans and the missile site radars have been placed near any given city, it would have been easy, and logical, for the Sprints to have been put there too, and it is this line of reasoning that led people to worry about a thick system.

By the time Nixon and the National Security Council were holding almost daily meetings, the uproar was universal. Large numbers of editorial writers, Senators and Congressmen were

vociferously arguing against any ABM system at all. Lyndon Johnson's scientific adviser, Dr. Hornig, was joined by scientific advisers from the Eisenhower days, who said that with the present level of the art, an ABM system was not just useless, but positively dangerous. Dr. Lapp (who worked on the Manhattan project) said that if you felt you had to do something, why not harden the ICBM silos, which could be done for a fraction of the cost and would be just as effective. The Russians chipped in, in *Izvestia*, saying that deployment of a defensive system could hardly help the progress to arms talks.

Compromise solution

The fight within the administration was fiercely fought—the many delays in the announcement are witness to that—and in the end Nixon made a typical compromise. He could not go for an all-out defence (because of almost any consideration you care to name: economic, political, strategic), and he could not cancel all work and rely on research and development, if only because he had allowed his Secretary of Defence to be outspoken in fav-

our of having some sort of defence.

He chose a middle course, and in so doing corrected at least two mistakes. Firstly, he blew away the lie that an ABM defence was aimed at the Chinese and not the Russians. (After all, America's ICBMs are aimed at Russian sites, so if you protect them, you must be protecting against a putative Russian attack.) Secondly, he removed all question of his system leading to a thick system. The new ABM defences will be placed at or near ICBM silos. The Spartans obviously can defend cities from there, but the Sprints cannot. For a full city defence, different batteries of radars, computers and missiles will have to be set up.

But more important than that, he restores some logic to the business by giving greater recognition to the first rule of the nuclear game.

The nuclear game is a game of deterrence. If you want to play the game at the highest level, you have to have a credible deterrent. The first rule, therefore, is protect your deterrent.

I know it sounds too simple to be true, but it is a principle that has sometimes been forgotten. What, for instance, is the point of trying to defend your cities when you admit that your defences, however thick, could not stop a full-scale Russian attack? Far from deterring, the building of such defences might persuade the Russians that you were going to risk a first strike yourself, and this might push them into pre-emptive attack. The provocative nature of city defence was recognised by President Nixon, and abandoned.

In the argot of the apocalypse, "damage limitation" gave way to "assured destruction." The new development is designed to protect America's *offensive* weapons from being annihilated by the Russians in a first strike. The basis of deterrence is simply that the Russians, or the Chinese, will no doubt do a great deal of damage and kill a great many Americans if they attack first, but that America will still have its attacking force intact, and the Federal wrath will be terrible indeed. The latest estimate of the terror was given by Clark Clifford in January: the U.S. has a second strike capacity to destroy more than 40 per cent. of Russia's population and 75 per cent. of

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Threat from China

its industrial plant, even after the highest attack predicated. The damage the U.S. could do to China is just as bad, if not worse.

So Mr. Nixon decided to protect his deterrent. He also disposed of the argument that any deployment would make arms talks with the Russians more difficult to arrange. It was just after the first announcement of deployment, in 1967, that the Russians formally declared their interest in strategic talks.

But he also left some questions unanswered. Why not choose the much cheaper method of super-hardening the ICBM silos, with concrete, and if necessary with electronic fields? Why, as he claimed, would any hold up now cause a two-year delay in deployment (which is scheduled for 1973-75)? Why set up any defences at all, since it is so much easier, and cheaper, to counter defences with better offensive weapons?

A partial answer to the last of these questions is the unpredictability of China. Throughout all official statements on strategic policy, by this or the previous Administration, runs the thread of Chinese irrationality, though for the last 20 years the Chinese have shown themselves no more rash in external affairs than the Russians. Nevertheless, both Mr. Johnson and Mr. Nixon have felt bound to buy what is called "madman insurance."

Mr. Nixon, indeed, went so far as to indicate that China was the real joker in the pack. He announced that American intelligence reports now held that Russia's radars, previously aimed at the U.S., were now aimed at China also. So long as the Chinese threat lasted, he went on, neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union would want to abandon an ABM defence completely.

The bad news hidden in this is that the new American system, costing \$7,000m., really is, as he called it, "a minimum programme." There is no telling what the final cost will be.

Well, there goes \$7,000m. that won't be used to clean up the cities or feed the hungry. Even if a grass-roots campaign has played an important part in bringing about a major change in national strategic policy, the New York Times is in no doubt about Mr. Nixon's decision: "The ABM system is a project as wasteful as the pyramids and not much more useful."

Would I be safer in Leighton Buzzard or Cheltenham? Well . . . Oh, there is one point I forgot to mention. There will be specific protection for *one* city in America: Washington, D.C. I suppose that should enable me to sleep at night. Not only are we in Washington safe from attack from outer space (they wouldn't have anywhere to park), but also from the inscrutable Chinese. Despite all, my insomnia is such that as I write this, the cold grey light of early Sunday is slinking in through my windows.

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Support for Nixon missiles plan

From LOUIS HEREN—Washington, March 16

The first reactions to President Nixon's decision to build the modified Safeguard anti-ballistic missile system are rather better for the Administration than it had hoped. Many powerful Congressmen have given their support, and Soviet press reports are favourable.

The Russians have chosen not to see the decision as further evidence of the power of the American military-industrial complex. Instead they have emphasized the defensive role of the system.

Thus Mr. Nixon seems to have surmounted the first hurdle. The proposed talks on strategic arms limitation will presumably begin when both sides are ready.

His reasons for not going ahead with the defence of cities against nuclear attack have also impressed many of his critics. He has revealed a sure grasp of what is involved in both deterrents and disarmament, which has suggested that Safeguard is not the thin end of an A.B.M. wedge that, according to Senator Symington, could eventually cost \$400,000m. (£166,000m.).

In Congress the project has the support of all party leaders, except Senator Mike Mansfield and Senator Edward Kennedy, the majority leader and whip in the Senate. The chairmen of the relevant committees in both Houses, appropriations and armed services, have given their endorsement.

Senator Richard Russell (Georgia) is chairman of the Senate appropriations committee, temporary president of the Senate, and the acknowledged leader of

the inner group which controls the second chamber.

In opposition are the moderates of both parties. They cannot be ignored by any means, but the removal of the A.B.M. sites from the cities has for the time being reduced much of their popular support. Generally speaking, public resistance was not to A.B.M.s as such, but to sites in suburban areas.

The congressional contest will be lively, as the President expected. Legislation will have to be handled by four committees for authorization and appropriation, and there will be more opportunities on the floor of both Houses to do battle.

The opponents' popular support, moreover, could be revived. There are those who believe that more money must be found for domestic programmes, and there is the general loss of confidence in military judgment as a result of the Vietnam war.

These could combine to strengthen the movement to reassert the Senate's prerogative of advise and consent, another result of the war. This has already found expression in the commitment resolution passed by the Senate foreign relations committee last week, restating that affirmative action by both the executive and legislative branches is necessary before a national commitment is made abroad.

Much of this has little to do with A.B.M.s, which is less of a drawback than might be supposed. What is at stake here is the relationship between President Nixon and Congress, and the fate of his legislative programme—presuming that he has one.

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